

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1280
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2146

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: EG, IS
SUBJ: ANTI-SEMITISM IN EGYPTIAN PRESS

REF: (A) STATE 36713, (B) CAIRO 4313, (C) CAIRO 3519

1. DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY CAIRO SHOULD BE AWARE THAT, IN OUR LENGTHY DISCUSSION FEBRUARY 11, AMONG THE MULTITUDE OF THINGS ON BEGIN'S MIND WAS THE CONTINUATION OF UNSAVORY ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE EGYPTIAN PRESS. AT ONE POINT, WHILE DISCUSSING THE THEN-PENDING DECISION ON AIRCRAFT SALES, BEGIN CITED A RECENT OCTOBER MAGAZINE ARTICLE AS SAYING THAT "SHYLOCK" SHOULD KNOW THAT THE ARABS CAN UNITE AGAIN AND THAT, WHEN THEY DO, THERE COULD BE ANOTHER WAR.

2. LATER, BEGIN REFERRED MORE POINTEDLY TO THE SCURRILOUS JANUARY 31 ARTICLE IN AL-AKHBAR (REF C) AND TO THE ANALOGY IT DREW BETWEEN GERMAN JEWS DURING THE 1930'S AND AMERICAN JEWS TODAY. I SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL HIM THAT I--AND ANYONE WITH A SENSE OF DECENCY--COULD ONLY DEPLORE SUCH WRITING. HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT OFFERS GUIDANCE TO THE PRESS, THE LATTER IS BY NO MEANS CONTROLLED. IDEAS SUCH AS HE HAD JUST CITED
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ARE NOT THOSE OF SADAT OR HIS GOVERNMENT.

3. WHEN BEGIN WENT ON TO DECRY THE FACT THAT A FEW WEEKS AGO HE WAS THE "HERO OF PEACE" AND THAT SOMEONE THEREFORE MUST HAVE PRESSED THE OPPOSITE BUTTON, I INSISTED THAT IT JUST WASN'T THAT SIMPLE. I INFORMED HIM THAT AMBASSADOR EILTS AND HIS STAFF HAD DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM WITH EGYPTIANS AT ALL LEVELS

AND THAT WE WERE CONVINCED THERE HAD BEEN A REAL REDUCTION IN THE QUANTITY OF THIS TYPE OF OBJECTIONABLE PRESS REPORTING OUT OF EGYPT. THE FACT REMAINS THERE ARE SELECTED EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS WHO SIMPLY DISLIKE ISRAEL AND WILL CONTINUE TO SAY SO. SADAT DOES NOT HAVE THE CONTROL OVER THEM THAT ISRAEL APPARENTLY THINKS HE DOES. I URGED BEGIN TO AVOID DWELLING ON THE OCCASIONAL PIECE OF SCURRILOUS JOURNALISM AND NOT TO LET IT DISRUPT HIS CONSIDERATION OF THE CENTRAL ISSUES BEFORE US.

4. COMMENT: UNFORTUNATELY, I CANNOT BE CONFIDENT THAT MY REMARKS MADE ANY IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON BEGIN, SUCH WAS HIS STATE OF MIND AT THE TIME. PERHAPS MORE TO THE POINT, THE ISRAELIS CLEARLY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SADAT IS INCAPABLE OF TURNING OFF THE TAP AT WILL.
LEWIS

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